GATE-HOUSE TO THE OLD PRIORY, MONTACUTE.

GATE-HOUSE TO THE OLD PRIORY, AT MONTACUTE, IN SOMERSETSHIRE.

Montacute is one of the most picturesque villages in the county of Somerset; and, in addition to its natural beauties, it possesses those of particular interest to the architect. It contains, and its immediate vicinity affords, several ancient edifices of great architectural merit. The building here represented, compared with some others, is perhaps of lesser interest, but still has much value both to the artist and to the antiquary. It is the gate-house of the old priory, whose history shall shortly be touched upon.

The chief attraction of the village is the princely residence of the Phelips', Montacute House; but of this noble pile detailed representations of every part have been published, except, strange to say, its finest portion, the north front, which originally belonged to Clifden-hall, one of those fine old Tudor gothic structures, similar to Hengrave, in Suffolk, and to which it is nearly equal.

Of the old priory at Montacute, the gate-house and a small building on each side are the only remains. The view represents the back-front and the porch added to it in the reign of Henry VIII. With the exception of this porch the building is of late perpendicular character, in the same style as the noble village church, which immediately adjoins it,—so much alike are the details of these two structures that we may consider they were built about the same time. The entrance front of the gate-house is very picturesque, and is greatly superior to the front represented in the print; it has at each angle two bold octagon towers, one of which reaches above the battlements. The bow-window in the first floor is repeated in both fronts, and under them are the arched entrances, the sides of which have clustered columns, and the pointed arches over them are richly moulded; they are hidden by the mean sheds erected before them. The centre battlement contains in one side, a bas-relief of the royal arms, and in the other are two letters (which appear to be C. C.) under a mitre; these probably were the initials of the abbot by whom the building was erected. There is one room which still retains its ancient appearance internally; the ceiling is formed of the open joists and girders of the floor above: they are in oak, richly moulded.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* of May 1817, there is an account of the priory; it was founded about the year 1091, by William, Earl of Morton, as a priory for black cluniac monks, it was surrendered to Henry VIII: in 1539, the site was granted to Sir William Petre, and sold by him to Mr. Robert Freke; it was soon after purchased by the family of Phelips, in whose possession it still remains.

I cannot quit the description of the building without pointing out a barbarous tree which threatens its destruction. This tree, suffered to take root within the gateway, has mounted up, till having come into contact with the stone-work of the vault, it has forced its way through the wall at the angle, and appears on the outside. As its bulk increases year by year, it threatens to upheave the arch-stone, and, if so, the whole vaulting will fall in, and probably bring the beautiful fabric in one pile of ruin to the ground. Now, on a former occasion, Mr. Editor, the insertion in your valuable paper of a view of the turret of Leigh de la Mere Church, in Wilts, and of an account pointing out the insecure state of that interesting structure, caused immediate attention to be paid to it, and the restoration of the entire building under experienced hands is soon to take place. I do hope that this number will be equally efficacious in saving from destruction by such vulgar means, the elegant structure at Montacute.

In the vicinity of the village is Brympton old manor-house, an ancient building of the reign of Henry VII. It possesses a noble garden front of great size, built by Inigo

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